GREETINGS:

THE VALE, INC.

Route 1, Box 275
Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387
December 22, 1966

Each year at this season the intentional community called "The Vale" raises and distributes to some progressive causes serving human need a sum of money that is conceived as recompense or payment for the privilege of the use and occupancy of the Vale land. We do this because we recognize the land as the limited common heritage of mankind for which we have a brief period of responsibility as stewards, and not conceiving of it as mere personal assets to use, abuse, to profiteer with or let stagnate without regard to human need.

Because good land is in limited supply and many people need it, land ownership is an opportunity to profiteer in renting and selling, and concentration of landownership in the hands of a few people leaves many dispossessed and forced to make excessive payment for rent or purchase if they are to have a place to live. Thus sale and rent of land is one of the basic sources of exploitation and unearned income. For such reasons concentrations of ownership of land and profiteering from that ownership are one of the major sources of injustice, social conflict and war.

It is with such considerations in mind that we at the Vale have undertaken to pioneer and experiment with new patterns in occupation, management and responsibility for land. One feature of our pioneering is to have land held by individual families in leaseholds rather than in "fee simple" ownership -- a procedure similar to that followed in Israel with land held by the Jewish National Fund and leased to individuals and to communities. Each Vale member family has a leasehold of a half acre or more, and each family pays not only for common expenses such as road maintenance, but also approximately three percent of the value of its land holding goes into the common fund mentioned above. Once a year at a Vale meeting we decide on the distribution of this fund for purposes of human welfare, especially toward improving circumstances and serving needs in regard to land ownership and tenure. This year our contribution will go partly to the land fund of the Nityanikethan project in India in which we share concern for this pioneering educational and community venture; part will go to a cooperative land holding for evicted share-croppers in Mississippi, and part will go to another concern we share -- the Yellow Springs Peace Action Center which not only is working for world peace but is helping market handicrafts made by people in the freedom movement in the deep south.

This procedure of taxing land value (and not its improvements) is in part an expression of Henry George's philosophy; widely used, this practice of land taxation stimulates the right use and development of land and helps prevent speculative holding of it for profit or its being held underdeveloped or unused. This also expresses a clear recognition of external responsibility in the occupancy of land, that our payment to the fund is not a "charity" or gift, but something we owe, and that we have the responsibility to decide where it should best be used. We value the feeling of personal responsibility this gives us as compared with the impersonal character of the payment of taxes to the state and federal government.

The Vale not only recognizes its responsibility to human society, but has devoted about a third of its land to a wildlife easement to be used and enjoyed alike by wildlife, Vale inhabitants, and by people who come for miles to enjoy its beauty -- and its mushrooms. This part of the Vale is part of the Yellow Springs Country Corners.

With Seasons Greetings, we are The Vale

Grace Mager